

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

US-PAKISTAN RELATIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

by

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Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

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The 58 year history of US - Pakistan relations has been marked by periods of intense courtship as well as phases of extreme mutual distrust. Since 9/11, the US-Pakistan relations have again entered an era of close ties. However, there is a perception that the warmth of the relationship is limited to the US's need for Pakistani support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and that the strength of the relationship is dependent upon the continued personal support of and presence of President Pervez Musharraf in office. This paper assesses the fidelity of this perception by examining the history of US-Pakistan relations (both pre and post 9-11), outlines the major factors currently influencing this relationship, and proposes an approach to strengthen the foundation for future US-Pakistan cooperation. It concludes that Pakistani support for the US efforts in the GWOT is based upon a large base of support by the Pakistani populace that is consistent with Pakistani vital interests. Nevertheless, the paper outlines additional US-Pakistani engagement opportunities in the areas of literacy and education, building national institutions, economic assistance, technology transfer, resolving the Kashmir dispute, and military cooperation that could improve this important alliance and further stabilize this critical region.

US - PAKISTAN RELATIONS: THE WAY FORWARD

The 58 year history of relations between the USA and Pakistan has been marked by periods of courtship and phases of distrust. Since 9/11, these relations have again entered an era of close ties with shared interests. However, there is a perception that the renewed friendship is being driven primarily by the US need for Pakistani cooperation in the "War on Terrorism" and is dependent upon the continued presence of President Pervez Musharraf in office. The perception, if true, portends severe potential consequences for both the USA and Pakistan. This paper assesses the fidelity of this perception by examining the history of USA-Pakistan relations (both pre and post 9-11), outlines the major factors currently influencing this relationship, and proposes an approach to expand the foundation for future US-Pakistan cooperation.

An Historical Review (Pre-9/11)

Pakistan became independent on 14th August 1947 after a long struggle by the Muslims of British India under the leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah is considered the father of Pakistan and set in motion many political platforms that became the foundation for Pakistan's society.

Jinnah was influenced by both his life experiences and the challenges he overcame. A Muslim from Karachi, Jinnah had received most of his higher education in law from London. As a barrister, he soon became the leading lawyer of Bombay, India. As a politician, he was known for his commitment to the western style of democracy. Jinnah initially joined the Indian National Congress and launched the struggle for freedom of India from the British, joining hands with the prominent Hindu leaders. Gradually however, he found himself at odds with the Hindu majority on two issues: one, he was not in favor of civil-disobedience against the British that was advocated by the Hindu zealots and instead, preferred peaceful struggle; secondly, he discovered that the caste-centric Hindus did not intend to recognize the Muslims as equal citizens in India.¹

He then joined the All-India Muslim League and led the struggle for creation of an independent Muslim state located within the majority Muslim areas of India. Jinnah died on 11 September 1948, just one year after independence. Being newly independent states at the outset of the Cold War, India and Pakistan were soon faced with the dilemma of aligning either with the USA or the USSR. While India promptly warmed up to the USSR, the Pakistani leadership, mostly groomed in the Western institutions, opted for aligning with the West. Correspondingly, Liaqat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of Pakistan, turned down Stalin's

invitation to visit Moscow and went instead to Washington in 1950.² Presidents Roosevelt and Truman generally remained indifferent towards Pakistan from 1947 to 1952. In 1953 when the Eisenhower administration took office, the US government began to get anxious about the spread of communism to Asia and started to take an interest in Pakistan. This recognition culminated in the Mutual Defense Agreement between the two countries, signed in 1954.³

The USA and Pakistan relationship continued to improve with Pakistan joining SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) in 1955 and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in 1956. A main pillar of the relationship was the military cooperation between the two countries which blossomed through an active training exchange program and the fielding of US weapons and equipment within the Pakistan military. Additionally, Pakistan provided the Bataber Air Force Base near the Afghan border to the US for U2 reconnaissance flights over the USSR...then at substantial risk to its own security with regard to the USSR.⁴ Meanwhile, Pakistan fought a major war with India over Kashmir in 1965. A smaller but well trained Pakistan Army holding the US weaponry was able to defend the country against its much larger foe.

Pakistan also played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the USA and China when, under President Nixon, Washington decided to begin the process of normalizing relations with Beijing. In July 1971, Pakistan facilitated the secret mission to China undertaken by Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State. The first meeting between the two countries actually took place on-board a Pakistan Airlines plane flying to Beijing.⁵ Pakistan soon paid the price for its diplomatic activism when India, exploiting the political turmoil after the 1970 General Elections in Pakistan, attacked the eastern wing (now Bangladesh) with military support from the USSR. In the midst of this crisis, Pakistan turned to the US for assistance, but it was never provided. The war resulted in the division of Pakistan: West Pakistan became Pakistan and the East Pakistan became the independent country of Bangladesh. Partly as a consequence of this strategic failure, in 1972, a socialist democratic political party, The Peoples Party, came to power in Pakistan. The US - Pakistan relations, which had already deteriorated due to the lack of US support in 1971 war, further declined due to the presence of a socialist government in Pakistan.

The Iranian revolution of 1976 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 again brought renewed interest within the US for improving the US-Pakistan relationship. Pakistan suddenly became a key geo-strategic player as it became the only obstacle in the way of the USSR reaching the mouth of the Persian Gulf. Consequently, the US decided to fight a proxy war in land-locked Afghanistan and Pakistan was solicited to help support and spearhead this fight. As a frontline state with a military ruler in power (General Zia ul Haq had taken over the

government in a military coup in 1977), Pakistan more than served the US aims and was instrumental in forcing the Soviet Union to leave Afghanistan by 1988.

In retrospect, the period from 1979 to 1988 was a golden period in USA-Pakistan relations. However, both the governments remained focused upon the narrow national interests relevant to the security issues at that time. Most glaringly, the US interest was solely limited to unrestricted support to the Afghan jihad. Although successful, it accomplished a relatively short term and limited strategic aim of the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. The interests of Pakistan were also myopic, to include limited modernization of the armed forces and immediate US political support for the Pakistani military government. No worthwhile long term economic policy was formed nor was any major economic infrastructure developed. Thus overall, positive USA-Pakistan ties of the 1980s were marked by close military interactions, but also by the absence of any substantive projects aimed at serving the long-term interests of both countries.

Although successfully forcing the withdrawal of the Soviets from Afghanistan, the war effort also produced many negative consequences. The immediate effect of the US policy was a sharp rise in the number of Madrassas (religious seminaries) in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). These madrassas were meant to indoctrinate the young Muslim students from Afghanistan, Pakistan's tribal areas and other Arab countries. The students were also given military training and were inducted in Afghanistan to fight the Soviet forces. The indirect effects of the US policies during the Eighties in Pakistan included the spread of, what has been termed, the Kalashnikov culture; repressive policies by the Zia regime resulting in suppression of the freedom of press; a rise in ethnicity and sectarianism; and the deterioration of Pakistani domestic institutions. Overall, the joint policies of the US and Pakistan governments, with active support from some Arab countries, resulted in the militarization of the Muslim youth with far-reaching negative consequences for the growth of terrorism within the region.

Moreover, during this period, Pakistan suffered extreme internal instability thanks to the joint efforts of the Soviet K.G.B. and its Indian equivalent, the RAW (Research and Analysis Wing). There were thousands of bomb blasts in trains, bus and railway stations, shopping centers and other public places resulting in large numbers of civilian casualties. There was also a rise in political polarization due to the continued governance by the military regime, and increased instability due to the introduction of a new phenomenon of ethnic and sectarian violence. The internal strife was fuelled by an influx of cheap Soviet origin weapons including Kalashnikovs, rocket launchers, and many other weapons.

Concurrently, Pakistan responded to the Indian nuclear development program by beginning the development of its own nuclear weapon capability. Although the US was strongly opposed to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it effectively turned a blind eye to these developments as Pakistan was the most important ally in containing the Soviet southward expansion. As the Soviet Union left Afghanistan in 1988, the US interest in South Asia also waned. Afghanistan, at that time, was in deep turmoil due to a decade of Soviet occupation and civil war. Much against the advice of Pakistani leadership, US left Afghanistan without any follow-up strategy for reconstruction and stabilization.

US treatment of Pakistan was no better. Not only was the promised aid of \$ 4.02 billion to Pakistan withdrawn, the US imposed various sanctions on Pakistan for pursuing the development of nuclear weapons. The US "blind eye," no longer obscured by Soviet expansion, began to see. Then, President Zia ul Haq, along with some of the top military generals and the US Ambassador, were killed in a C130 air crash as part of an act of terrorism. There were no smoking guns, but the list of possible perpetrators included RAW, KGB and the Pakistan Peoples Party (the political party in power at the time of Zia ul Haq's coup). Some within Pakistan even conjectured that the CIA may have been involved on the premise that President Zia ul Haq had become a liability for the US. The mystery of the air crash was never solved and the resultant uncertainty cast another long shadow over the US-Pakistani relationship.

Correspondingly, the period of courtship between the US and Pakistan during the last decade of the cold war was followed by a decade of declining cooperation due to the Pakistan-specific sanctions mandated by the Pressler Amendment. Although from 1988 to 1998 there were four democratically elected governments in Pakistan, they mostly remained focused on internal petty politics to the strategic detriment of the country. In many respects, it was a lost decade for Pakistan. In May 1998, Pakistan again seized center stage in South-Asia when it exploded six nuclear devices as a response to the Indian nuclear explosions in Pokharan. The US responded by further tightening the sanctions against Pakistan. As a consequence, Pakistan's economic condition worsened while ethnic and sectarian extremism began to build. Also during this period, the newly liberated Central Asian Republics (CARs) offered many economic and trade opportunities for Pakistan. However, the instability in Afghanistan continued to act as a barrier between Pakistan and the CARs. Starved for energy resources and hoping to access the Central Asian markets via the shortest route, Pakistan started to cooperate with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.⁶

The growing discontent among the masses with the successive corrupt political governments and the immediate fallout of the Kargil conflict with India in Kashmir were catalysts

for the blood-less coup in October 1999. The Chief of Staff of the Army, General Musharraf, assumed the administrative control of the country with an agenda of reform, economic revival and eradication of extremism. President Musharraf's approach to governance was essentially different from the previous military regimes in that he did not impose martial law, did not limit freedom of the press and did not attempt to appease the religious right. He also differed from the four previous civil governments, which had lost their credibility due to their corrupt practices, by keeping his own administration clean of the corrupt elite including bureaucrats, politicians and even selected senior military officers. Regarding the situation in Afghanistan, President Musharraf also endeavored to bring home to the US leadership, the threat posed by al Qaeda and how Pakistan could help in breaking the impasse.⁷

Post 9/11

It is at this juncture that the fateful events of 11th September 2001 took place. President Musharraf was prompt in extending full support to the US in the war against terrorism following the attacks. He agreed to all the requests listed by Secretary Colin Powell, which according to some records, was more than what the US Administration expected at that time.⁸ President Musharraf has been frequently criticized within Pakistan for giving in too easily and conceding too much to the US without adequate recompense.⁹ The most probable reason for his forthright response was the recognition that the US and Pakistan could together take on the radical religious and terrorist elements growing within the region. Musharraf was already moving on that path. His whole hearted support to the US, instead of sitting on the fence, has subsequently helped build a strong relationship between the US and Pakistan.¹⁰ Consequently, Pakistan has assumed a central and active role in the war on terrorism.

Some argue that Pakistan's support for the War on Terrorism is being sustained by the force of President Musharraf's personality alone and does not reflect the true priorities of the country's populace and its national interests. Interestingly, the argument is used by Musharraf's political foes as well as some of his supporters for opposite reasons. His political opponents and the anti-US lobby, while addressing the domestic audience, would forward the argument that supporting the war on terrorism is extremely unpopular in Pakistan. They imply that President Musharraf is fighting an unholy war to please the US and thus should be removed from power. Those who are favorably disposed towards him, while talking to the international media, would over-emphasize that it is only President Musharraf who can provide unrestricted Pakistani support to the war on terrorism and thus his continuation as President is crucial to the US interests. Both arguments lack credence and undermine President Musharraf's personal

security. It is likely that this perception of the policy's dependency on President Musharraf has led to multiple attempts on his life, at least two of which came very close to being successful. In fact, his opposition to growing religious extremism began well before 9/11.

President Musharraf had already started to strike at the roots of extremism before being approached by the US following the 9/11 attacks. Moreover, the large majority of Pakistanis do not share the Islamists' vision of the future of the country and are concerned about the growth of extremism. For instance, Pakistan went through a general election in 2002 in which all political parties contested the elections on their professed agendas. The Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid), and its allied parties aligned with President Musharraf's political ideology, won the elections in three of the four provinces and formed the central as well as three provincial governments. Conversely, Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA), a grouping of six religious parties, which contested the elections using anti Musharraf and anti-US slogans, won its seats mostly from the Pushtun area - the tribal dominated NWFP. In the words of Hussain Haqqani, "Despite the MMA's unprecedented electoral performance in 2002, the alliance garnered only 11 percent of the total votes cast; the Islamist vote as a percentage of total registered voters has been more or less stagnant since the 1970s."¹¹ The results of the election also reflect the pattern of support within the country for the war on terrorism...with the majority clearly behind President Musharraf's hard-line approach to extremism.

Not only does the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid) support the war on terrorism, many of the opposition leaders, who sometimes criticize President Musharraf on other issues, support him when it comes to fighting terrorism. Notwithstanding the force of his own personal commitment to the War on Terror, President Musharraf's policies have the support of much of the Pakistani nation including both the political and military leadership. However, much of this support was solidified and expanded through his dynamic leadership and ability to communicate to the masses the rationale for Pakistan's role in the war on terrorism.

In contrast to the US-Pakistan relations of 1980s, the present relationship, although initiated due to the essentially negative incident of 9/11, has developed along a more sophisticated agenda. Instead of a one point-of-contact with the US by President Musharraf or a single dimension agenda of support for the war on terrorism, Pakistan has used the opportunity of improved relations with the US to pursue a broad based series of issues. The policies being pursued by the government of President Musharraf are in the best interest of Pakistan and the US...both in the short term as well as in the long term.

The main reason for the improved quality of the relationship is the convergence of both countries' views on globalization, the eradication of militancy, economic development and

democratization. The US government has genuinely taken an interest in reducing Pakistan's foreign debt burden. Besides using its influence on G-8 countries for economic cooperation, the US's good offices have also facilitated Pakistan's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The US has also removed all sanctions imposed on Pakistan and has reassured Pakistan that her nuclear weapon capability is accepted and will not be subject to future roll back efforts. The US and Pakistan are also cooperating in the field of nuclear non- proliferation which is essential for bringing the issue of proliferation involving Dr. Qadeer Khan to a logical and mutually acceptable resolution.

In regard to the economy, macro economic measures to take Pakistan out of the debt trap have also met with some success. According to the CIA Fact Book on Pakistan, "IMF- approved government policies, bolstered by generous foreign assistance and renewed access to global markets since 2001, have generated solid macroeconomic recovery in the last three years. The government has made substantial macroeconomic reforms since 2000... While long-term prospects remain uncertain, given Pakistan's low level of development, medium-term prospects for job creation and poverty reduction are the best in nearly a decade."¹² It goes on to add that:

Islamabad has raised development spending from about 2 percent of GDP in the 1990s to 4 percent in 2003, a necessary step towards reversing the broad underdevelopment of its social sector. GDP growth, spurred by double-digit gains in industrial production over the past year, has become less dependent on agriculture. Foreign exchange reserves continued to reach new levels in 2004, supported by robust export growth and steady worker remittances.¹³

Consequently, Pakistan is in the midst of an economic upturn. The outgoing fiscal year has indeed been fruitful for Pakistan's economy. The year has posted several multiyear "firsts:" Pakistan's real GDP growth of 8.4 percent in 2004-05 is the fastest pace in two decades; the fifth time in the country's history that it exceeded the 8 percent growth mark; Pakistan positioned itself as the second fastest growing economy after China in 2004-05; its per capita income crossed the \$ 700 mark; Pakistan achieved its highest ever production of cotton (*14.6 million bales*) and wheat (*21.1 million tons*) in 2004-05; it has seen the largest ever expansion of private sector credit in 2004-05; exit from the IMF Programme marked an important milestone; Pakistan became the fourth sovereign nation to issue an Islamic Bond (Sukuk), following Malaysia, Qatar and Bahrain; the country's public and external debt burden declined to their lowest in decades....¹⁴

This year has seen improvements in many macroeconomic indicators along with improvements in social and living conditions. Key indicators such as literacy rate, gross and net

enrollment in primary, middle and matric levels; access to sanitation and safe drinking water; use of electricity and gas as source of lighting and cooking fuel, respectively; various health indicators such as child immunization and treatment of Diarrhea, have all shown marked improvements over the last 4 – 7 years. While socioeconomic and macroeconomic policies pursued during the year have had a strong influence on across-the-board improvement, an increasingly broad and dynamic global recovery has aided Pakistan in this endeavor.¹⁵

Simultaneously, the government has launched some mega projects to improve the macro-economic situation of the country. Gwadar port is being constructed in the relatively underdeveloped province of Balochistan on the Arabian Sea and is nearing completion. The project had been on the drawing board since the early 1990s, but could not be initiated by successive governments for politico-economic reasons. Initiated in 2002, the deep-sea port will allow docking of large mother cargo ships and would provide the shortest access to the land-locked region of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Western China.

The Thar Coal Project promises significant economic gains. The project is based on the Thar coalfield, which has a resource potential of 175 billion tones of coal and covers an area of 9000 square kilometers in Tharparker district in the Sindh province. The project has been divided into four specific tracts that have the potential to run four major power-generating units with a total of 500 MW for thirty years or more. The cost of generating electricity or running industrial plants on coal would be much cheaper than oil and would also reduce the country's oil import bill.¹⁶

Pakistan government is at the concluding stage of the decision making process to opt for either an Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project, or a Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) gas pipeline project, or both, depending upon the political situation and economic viability.¹⁷ The projects, when completed, will take care of the energy requirements of Pakistan and, if extended to India, will provide additional income through transit fees. The gas pipelines are also likely to bring the regional states closer to each other politically and economically.

Pakistan is the USA's most trusted ally in the global war on terrorism. Like anywhere else in the world, this war could not be won without winning the hearts and minds of the populace and isolating the terrorists from their support bases. In the same context, the cleansing of the border belt with Afghanistan of the terrorist cells has been accompanied by large-scale economic and development projects in the tribal areas aimed at ridding them of such tendencies forever. Construction of roads, schools, and hospitals in previously inaccessible areas has significantly helped to bring the people of those areas into the main stream of national life. A two-pronged strategy was developed to implement the concept with both prongs working

in tandem: Undertake development work after initiating a political process to take Malikis / elders on board, and, operations by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) to open up the area and obviate its use by the terrorists / miscreants.

The development work completed before June 2005 is described in the following chart:¹⁸

Roads/Tracks		Schools		Basic Health Units		Water Supply Schemes	
Planned	Completed	Planned	Completed	Planned	Completed	Planned	Completed
785 miles of tracks	454 miles tracks	29	24	2	2	21 x Water Storages	14
230 miles of roads	35 percent					565 x Hand Pumps	343
						18 x Tube Wells	13
						7 x Dug wells	5
						10 x Turbines	5

TABLE 1.

Development work and political engagement in the heretofore inaccessible and unfriendly areas has more than served the objectives of the GWOT. Pakistani security forces have captured the highest number of al Qaeda and Taliban terrorists including top leaders like Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, Abu Zubaydah and Abu Faraj al-Libbi.¹⁹ The Pakistan Army has killed over 300 and apprehended approximately 700 terrorists in the Afghan border region. In addition, the Civilian Law Enforcement Agencies have conducted 194 raids throughout the country in which 573 terrorists have been apprehended. In their efforts to apprehend the undesirable elements, the Pakistani security forces have suffered the highest number of casualties in active operations against al Qaeda and Taliban after the US. Over 300 soldiers have lost their lives and over 600 have been wounded. Through a combination of constitutional reforms, enactment of anti-terrorist laws, and cooperation with international law enforcement organizations, the suspected terrorists involved in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center (WTC), killing of two CIA officials in Virginia and the bombing of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were deported to the US.²⁰

Another important issue being tackled by the government is education and literacy. Almost half of the Pakistani population is currently illiterate. The young illiterate boys from poor families who either cannot afford admission in a school or do not have access to a school are invariably admitted in small Masjid (mosque) schools or madrassas. Unfortunately, the Madrassa system is cast in a very negative light by the world at large and is considered a hot bed and breeding ground for terrorism. This generalized perception is not correct, as these

Madrassas are perhaps the largest NGO system in the World. These are religious schools which provide succor to the poor and the needy. The Madrassas provide food, shelter and education to those children whose parents/wards cannot afford them. The education in such schools is generally limited to religious education. The Pakistan government neither funds nor exercises control on the syllabi being taught in such schools nor monitors the quality of religious teachers – the Imams. These schools are run by local communities and the Imams are also hired by the locals. Almost 95 percent of Madrassas are moderate and build a strong moral fiber in the students.²¹ However, there are some which are controlled by hard-line and militant organizations including some foreign donors. These expound extremist views and posture the students to oppose society. While the government has initiated a strict crackdown against extremist Madrassas, a well thought out and comprehensive strategy has been prepared to bring these institutions into the mainstream. Some of the steps initiated by the government include control over the recruitment of teachers and organizing training workshops for them; government funding as well as control over other sources of funding followed by audits of the accounts; and regular monitoring and evaluation by the education department. A major step has been the introduction of formal subjects in 8000 Madaris to bridge the gap between Madrassa education and the formal education system. The government's involvement is likely to establish and strengthen the lines of communication between the Madrassas and the government, educate about 1.5 million students in formal subjects, while helping to eradicate extremism in the country.²²

Besides the specific issues concerning the madrassas, education sector reform has been a major priority of the Pakistan government in the last five years. The reforms include administrative measures like separation of general education, higher education and special education ministries, provision of free education up to high school level, and phenomenal increase in funding for higher education, especially science and technology, etc. The syllabi in the schools are being revised with the dual purpose of ridding them of extremist ideologies and making them compatible with international standards so that the degrees are acceptable in the Western countries. The government's endeavors have borne positive results. The Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for primary schools (Age 5-9) has increased from 72 percent in 2001-02 to 86 percent in 2004-05. The increase in Matric Level (Age 13-14) GER (42 to 44 percent) is moderate but the real impact will be observable after 4-5 years when the existing primary level cohort will reach Matric Level.²³ The US government is also taking a keen interest in supporting the education reforms in Pakistan. Having already invested about \$100 million, according to the

State Department, the US has a long term vision for Pakistan's education system and plans to modernize the education in the engineering and high-technology sectors.

Another area of focus for the Pakistan government has been movement forward on the path of democratization. The government is now being run by elected representatives with a legitimate parliament in place. An extremely courageous and ultimately popular step by the regime has been the handing over of local government from the bureaucracy to elected representatives. These and other steps initiated by President Musharraf as part of his policy of modernization and enlightened moderation are not only important steps towards Pakistan's long term goals but also serve US long term interests such as globalization, eradication of extremism, and democratization. President Musharraf has also been criticized for continuing to don his uniform. The rationale that he has given for not removing the uniform is that the democratic reforms that he has introduced have not yet taken root. His absence from the scene would have left the process incomplete. A large majority of the Pakistani people who see a positive impact with improved economic activity and corruption-less environment, at least among the top echelon of the government, believe him and would prefer that he oversees the government functioning and retain the strategic direction for the modernization of Pakistan. The PEW Global Attitudes Project in its "Gauging National Satisfaction" survey comments: "Pakistan, despite continued conflict in neighboring Afghanistan, also weighs in on the positive side, with 57 percent of the public content with the country's current course, compared with 39 percent who are not. This represents continued improvement over the 54 percent-41 percent margin recorded a year ago and a sharp reversal of the 29 percent-67 percent balance of dissatisfaction recorded in May 2003."²⁴

Opportunities for Expanding US-Pakistan Interests

Continued improvements in the US-Pakistan relationship provide unique benefits to both countries. A country of more than 150 million people, Pakistan is the sixth most populous nation overall and the second largest in the Muslim world. Among the Muslim countries it has the most promising and technologically sound human resources with the English language widely spoken and understood across the country. Located on the mouth of the Persian Gulf at the strategic junction of the Middle East, Central Asia, China and South Asia, Pakistan provides the shortest route for the CARs and China to reach the Arabian Sea. It also serves as a land bridge between energy-starved India and the energy-rich CARs and Iran. Located at the cross-roads of competing economic routes and strategic interests, Pakistan also happens to be a nuclear power. Besides being an important player in the region, Pakistan holds a very

respectable position in the 54 member Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). All these aspects and the neighborhood of China, India, Afghanistan and Iran make Pakistan an extremely lucrative geo-political ally.

Pakistan was created through a democratic constitutional process in the name of freedom of religious practice.²⁵ Although it has periodically resorted to the imposition of martial law and lapsed into military dictatorships, it continues to maintain a pluralistic character and is moving inexorably towards a fully democratic country. The non-Muslim minorities have complete freedom of religious practice and have representation in all tiers of democratic institutions. In the national assembly of Pakistan, a house of 342, a minimum of 10 seats are reserved for the non-Muslims, while the number of women legislators is 73 (13 above the minimum of 60 prescribed in the constitution). In addition, the non Muslims have reserved quota seats in the provincial assemblies and local bodies. The women, besides having genuine equal opportunities in all walks of life, have 33 percent reserved seats in the local bodies.²⁶ In the evolving post-9/11 world, where the US is facing a threat from non-state actors exploiting Muslim youth, Pakistan can serve as a great example for forwarding the agenda of a modern democratic Muslim state.

The credentials listed above and a strong tradition of US-Pakistan friendship makes Pakistan extremely relevant to the US national interest on multiple levels including: national security, access to the energy rich regions of the Middle East and the CARS, and the politico-economic goals of democratization and globalization.

Tommy Franks summarizes Pakistan's role in the war against al Qaeda in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan in the epilogue of his book *American Soldier* in these words:

Though the world knew little of Pakistan's military role in that battle, Pervez Musharraf was good to his word and he remains so today. Tough, battle-wise soldiers of Pakistan's 11th Corps killed and captured hundreds of al Qaeda terrorists that fled the fighting. And they continue to hunt terrorists to this day in the mountains of Waziristan, while Pakistani security forces track them in the cities. The recent arrests of al Qaeda terrorists mark just the latest success in the ongoing campaign.²⁷

On the Pakistani side, it is in Pakistan's national interest to make Pakistan a modern Islamic state and attain the national goals of economic autonomy, political sovereignty and prosperity. As a leading Muslim country, Pakistan also has an obvious interest in countering the growing global perception of a building conflict between the western world and Islam. The emergence of a violent and terrorist-based Islamic movement is as much a risk to Pakistan as to the Western countries. For rapid modernization, Pakistan also needs to exploit the West's technological advancements and better capitalize on the institutional reforms successfully used

in established democracies to eliminate corruption and establish the accountability of democratically elected and appointed government officials at all levels.

Improving the Substance and Visibility of US-Pakistan Cooperation

While the cooperation between both countries has increased manifold since 9/11, the mutual distrust has only marginally been reduced. According to the PEW survey, while 57 percent Pakistani's favor the current government policies and 52 percent consider Islamic extremism as a threat, only 23 percent vote favorably for the US. Although an improvement over 17 percent recorded two years ago, it is still below the 50 percent mark.²⁸ What is needed is a deliberate strategy for improving the US-Pakistan relationship and debunking the perception that it is based upon the vested interests of the US and the power base of President Musharraf. The US government has declared that its policy toward Pakistan is grounded on the following five goals, all spread horizontally:²⁹

- Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)
- Non proliferation of WMD.
- Pakistan-Afghanistan peaceful relationship.
- Successful Pakistan-India relationship.
- Democracy.

While the above goals seem to have a predominantly security orientation, there are other areas where the US and Pakistan can work together to, not only improve the substance and visibility of their current relationship, but also to take it beyond present needs.

Literacy and Education

The Pakistan government, with the financial and technological support of the US, should improve the regulation of all private schools, monitor the qualifications and selection of its instructors and standardize the syllabi. The flow of ideological extremism needs to be stopped at its source and prevented from infecting Muslim youth. Pakistan, with financial and technological support from the US, can successfully accomplish this important goal.

A mass literacy drive should be launched with increased funding by the government and involvement of related NGOs. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh within South Asia have made tremendous strides in the eradication of illiteracy. Pakistan could also benefit and learn from their experience. As indicated, the US should visibly contribute to this effort by providing necessary support, offering scholarships to promising young adults based upon their academic achievements, and sharing new technologically efficient distributed learning approaches. However, to be successful, all Pakistani and US efforts need to be consistent with both the

Pakistani culture and the Islamic ethos. Any activities incompatible with both, will not only fail but likely be counter-productive, regardless of the good intentions.

The Pakistan Millennium Conference on Higher Education, organized in 2002 and aimed at exploring the ways of enhancing the quality of higher education, was a step in the right direction.³⁰ The conference's following recommendations need to be vigorously pursued:

- There is no one right model for achieving quality; therefore universities must be given autonomy to set their own directions to achieve quality, with some minimal standards set by a monitoring body. Government control over universities must be eliminated.
- In order to establish institutional responsibility/discourse, faculty must be given guaranteed autonomy to conduct research and debate issues. Institutional autonomy and intellectual freedom are absolute imperatives for quality.
- The financial management systems as well as models of accountability of the universities for using allocated funds should be radically reorganized.
- In the short-term, money should be raised from the public by eliciting the support of people who are widely trusted and reputable. In the long term, the universities should build credibility by efficient and visible utilization of donor funds to harness non-governmental fiscal sources.
- Universities must undertake initiatives to lower the cost of education by utilizing new technologies. They should capitalize on the wealth of opportunities such as MIT open-courseware initiative to learn and teach their students.

Building of National Institutions

Despite an intense desire among most Pakistanis for an effective democratic order in the country, repeatedly, the democratic governments have failed to perform well due to poor governance. The weak performance of the successive elected governments has prevented democracy from establishing solid roots in the country. Every day that passes under these conditions, further reinforces the expectations within the populace that governance under a democracy will be inherently corrupt and/or inefficient. Immediate and highly visible actions are needed to change this perception and substantially reform Pakistani institutions. The US, as arguably the most established and successful democracy in the world, should help in developing the Pakistani democratic institutions and the education of politicians and legislators. In the long run, this may serve as the biggest service to Pakistan. Other major institutions like the judiciary, the Police, the tax structure and the bureaucracy are also in need of reform. Again, the approach to embedding sound policies and processes within the Pakistani

bureaucracies must be consistent with both the cultural and religious aspects of the Pakistani society. Nevertheless, an innovative program of US-Pakistan exchanges at all governmental levels, independent assessments of governmental agencies by ad hoc combined teams of US-Pakistan experts with follow-up action plans for short term and long term reform measures, and the establishment of permanent oversight organizations (like the Inspector Generals, Governmental Accounting Office, etc. existing in the US) that are empowered and trained to conduct organizational assessments and recommend reforms, could improve these Pakistani institutions. The US, with the help of some European countries, is already engaged in reforming important institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq, and spending huge sums of money and resources. The same ends can be met at a fraction of the cost in Pakistan where the entire infrastructure is already fairly developed and there is no or only a limited security threat.

Economic Assistance and Technology Transfer

Although Pakistan has an extremely promising youth with a fairly large pool of information technology (IT) experts and nuclear scientists, it is still moving towards the industrial age, let alone the information age. Even the modest consumer-based industries that have continued to grow have come under tremendous pressure due to flooding of the market with cheap Chinese goods. Pakistan can be helped to stand on its own feet and grow through direct foreign investment in the development of industrial infrastructure and through the transfer of some crucial technologies in the manufacturing industry. The US could take highly visible and important actions to facilitate Pakistan's exports to the US. Similarly, Pakistan should invest more in making the industrial outputs more competitive in the international market. The US involvement and contribution to improving Pakistani economic development and prosperity is a highly visible means by which to reinforce, to both the Pakistani people and the international community, the value of the US-Pakistani relationship.

Kashmir Dispute

The Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan has remained unresolved and provides both risks and opportunities for improving the US-Pakistan relationship. The dispute has absorbed huge amounts of Indian and Pakistani resources over the last half century and continues to bleed both countries of valuable resources that could be applied towards improving their economies and social programs. India insists on a bilateral resolution of the dispute, but lacks sincerity as the resolution would likely entail the ceding of disputed territory to Pakistan. Involvement of the international community, and especially the US, could help promote early resolution of the dispute. Besides absorbing huge financial resources, with Pakistan compelled

to maintain a strong military force far greater than other regional security threats require, the continuing insurgency in the Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) has given rise to a corresponding militancy in the Muslim youth. These young men are not only motivated to fight the Indian occupation forces in IHK, but are inculcated with the military training to take up arms against perceived injustice anywhere else in the world. Fair resolution of the dispute would help quell militancy among the youth as well as eliminate popular support for such behavior among the Pakistani masses. The US should lead an effort to leverage India's growing economic dependency on the US to enforce the U.N. resolutions for granting the right of self determination to the people of Kashmir. To ensure future security between the two nuclear rivals, the US could also enter a trilateral security arrangement for enhancing nuclear command and control arrangements in South Asia. Perhaps no other US action would receive so positive a response from both the Pakistani populace and the international community as the peaceful resolution of this divisive issue and the eventual rapprochement of India and Pakistan.³¹ Even small incremental progress in resolving this issue would receive high regional visibility and dispel the perception that the US-Pakistani relationship is Musharraf-dependent or War-on-Terrorism centric. Moreover, progress in resolving this security issue could allow for the reduction of Pakistani armed forces as well as free up significant forces for security operations against terrorists operating in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Global War on Terrorism and Military Cooperation

The military-to-military cooperation between the US and Pakistan has stood the test of time and has developed into a close relationship. The Pakistan military is a well trained and highly motivated force and has played an important role in national decision-making. Additionally, the bulk of the Pakistani military equipment is of US origin. Also, many of the senior military officers have attended professional courses in the US military schools and have had a positive exposure to American culture. Despite having a long military relationship, the US military had also lost touch with the Pakistan armed forces. During a visit to a military organization in Pakistan before 9/11, while meeting some middle ranking Army officers, the Commander in Chief of US Central Command was surprised to find that none of those officers had attended a military school in the US. He then remarked that the US had lost a complete generation of Pakistani military officers due to the Pressler sanctions and he was committed to correcting that mistake. Consequently, literally hundreds of Pakistani military officers have interacted and trained with their US counterparts in the last 4-5 years. The training of Pakistani

military personnel with and in the US should not only be maintained, but expanded. The following areas need improvement:

- Operations against terrorists are best conducted through timely information sharing between US and Pakistani agencies and by respecting each other's sovereignty and values. Many of the top leaders of al Qaeda were captured or killed by Pakistani security forces or Law Enforcement Agencies on information provided by the US intelligence agencies. Conversely, on some occasions the US intelligence or military forces acted unilaterally inside Pakistani territory. These incidents, besides mostly resulting in failure to achieve their intended objectives, also caused civilian casualties and losses to property, with a severe politico-diplomatic backlash. In a similar incident, on 13th January 06, 13 innocent persons (including 3 men, 5 women and 5 children) were killed in four houses in Pakistan's Bajaur Agency due to a US air or missile attack.³² Besides the loss of innocent lives, the incident was followed by diplomatic demarche by Pakistan government, public unrest in Pakistan and a plethora of problems for Pakistani security forces operating in those areas. The US should not act unilaterally with complete disregard for the territorial integrity of an ally as it does not serve the long-term interests of either country; notwithstanding the potential for these attacks to eliminate the easily replaceable al Qaeda leadership that are targeted. Information sharing has produced the best results and should be relied upon in the future.
- The US should provide technologically advanced equipment including sensors, surveillance and acquisition means, telecommunication equipment and unmanned aerial vehicles for monitoring movements and search and destroy missions in the extremely inhospitable terrain on Pak-Afghan border.
- Through active socio-economic measures, Pakistan should integrate the tribal areas into the mainstream political structure of the country to permanently eliminate the sanctuaries for the terrorists. The US government and NGOs can provide much needed financial and technological assistance for the economic uplift of the area.
- Pakistan can enhance jointness among the military services benefiting from the rich US experience in joint organizations and operations.
- The US should allow licensed production of US military equipment in Pakistan.

Conclusion

Pakistan's support to the US in the War on Terrorism has been a result of a conscious consensus in the Pakistani nation under the dynamic leadership of President Musharraf; but not

necessarily due to the force of his military position. Liberated through a democratic process, Pakistan has strong traditions of pluralistic attitudes in religion, politics and freedom of speech that are compatible with US values and priorities. On the other hand, although the events of 9/11 have acted as a catalyst in bringing the US closer to Pakistan, the current US policy towards Pakistan is not limited to the coalition waging the Global War on Terrorism. Although both nations have their respective national interests and security concerns, which they may not be expected to compromise, most of the long term interests of the US are shared by Pakistan and, more important, there are no areas of significant divergence.

Historically, there have been issues and incidences generating mutual distrust caused by divergent interests and disparate security concerns. Both countries have worked through those periods, recognized the major areas of coincident interests, and have deliberately pursued a closer relationship for the near term benefit of both. Nevertheless, there remain unexploited opportunities for improving the relationship for the long term benefit of both nations. An improved US-Pakistani relationship can solidify Pakistan as a reliable regional partner, be instrumental in continuing the war on terrorism, and further stabilize a region fraught with danger.

Endnotes

¹ Shahid Javed Burki, Historical Dictionary of Pakistan, 2nd ed. (London: The Scarecrow press, 1999), 186.

² Ibid., 336.

³ Ibid., 336-337

⁴ Ibid., 337

⁵ Ibid., 98

⁶ There were also other reasons meriting Pakistani support to the Taliban. The Afghan civil war had two distinct groupings based on their historic affinity: the Taliban, who were mostly Sunni Pushtoons, had actively fought for the liberation of Afghanistan from the Soviets and had been supported by the West, the Arab countries and Pakistan; the Northern Alliance was a collection of various minority ethnic and sectarian groups living in the northern and western parts of Afghanistan, their support base being in erstwhile Soviet Union, Iran and India. Peaceful Afghanistan was also a strategic necessity for Pakistan due to Pakistan's threat perception vis a vis India and Afghanistan's role as a state capable of providing strategic depth to Pakistan. The Taliban held fundamentalist religious ideology, but were extremely honest and were the only hope for bringing peace to the war-torn country.

⁷ Tommy Franks, *American Soldier* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers), 214-215. It is generally thought that due to lack of engagement with Pakistan, the US did not understand Pakistan's economic hardships and compulsions vis a vis Afghanistan. However, the conversation between General Tommy Franks, the Commander in Chief of the US Central Command and George Tenet, Director CIA, before the former's visit to Pakistan and also his interaction with President Musharraf indicate that by early 2001, the US understood the situation in Afghanistan, but reflects a good understanding of the ground realities at that time: "As a practical matter, Pakistan will continue an accommodation with the Taliban until we are able to offer a better alternative. Musharraf is between a rock and a hard place – India and the Pressler Amendment"... "Afghanistan offers the Pakistani's what we call 'strategic depth.' That's battle space to maneuver and support Pakistani combat forces in the event of another war with India." Tenet responded, "That's what my people tell me also." In his meeting with President Musharraf in January 2001, Tommy Franks was briefed personally by the President: "We have no choice but to work with the Taliban"... "I can assure you that we dislike their extremism, but they brought stability to Afghanistan and ended the bloodshed after the Soviets left. We must have stability on at least one border....The Taliban is isolated. We have some influence with them, but we don't control them. I will do my best to help, but we need help from the international community....Pakistan would like to help with the problem of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. If we can increase our influence with the Taliban, it is possible they would agree to expel him to some neutral state for either exile or to be put on trial." [0] Tommy Franks then said he could not grant concessions, but indicated that he would carry the message to Washington.

⁸ Ayaz Amir, "A Passion for Selling Ourselves Cheaply" available from <http://66.201.122.226/weekly/ayaz/20010921.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2006.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John A. Gastright, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South Asian Affairs, US Department of State, interview by author, 13 December 2005, Washington, D.C.

¹¹ Hussain Haqqani, *Pakistan—Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 326.

¹² CIA – The World Fact Book – Pakistan, available from <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/pk.html>; Internet; accessed 2 January 2006.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance, "Report on Economic Survey 2004-05" available from <http://www.finance.gov.pk/>; Internet; accessed 2 January 2006.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Daily Times, Pakistan, 'Sindh demands Rs. 1 billion for Thar coal project', 10 July 2003; available from http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_10-7-2003_pg7_36; Internet; accessed 5 January 2006.

¹⁷ Indiainfo.com, 'Work on Iran-India gas pipeline may begin by 2007', 30 December 2005; available from <http://news.indiainfo.com/2005/12/30/3012iran-india-gas-pipeline-work.html>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2006.

¹⁸ Brigadier Ikram Ullah, Pakistan's Senior National Representative at US Central Command, telephone interview by author, 20 December 2006.

¹⁹ Christina Rocca, Assistant Secretary of the State for South Asian Affairs, "Statement before the House International Affairs Committee for Asia and the Pacific," 14 June 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/p/sa/rls/rm/2005/47892.htm>; Internet; accessed 11 February 2006.

²⁰ Brigadier Ikram Ullah.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Government of Pakistan, Statistics Division, Federal Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad, "Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (2004-05)" available from <http://www.statpak.gov.pk>; Internet; accessed 19 December 2005.

²⁴ The PEW Global Attitudes Project, "*Data on Gauging National Satisfaction*" available from www.pewglobal.org; Internet; accessed 2 January 2006.

²⁵ The introduction to the National Assembly of Pakistan starts with these words: "Pakistan was created entirely through a democratic and constitutional struggle. Islam is the anchor-sheet of Pakistan and democracy is ingrained deep into the Muslim psyche. Islam permits no "hero worship". Pakistan's record of parliamentary democracy may be checkered but its return to this form after each pause and break more than vindicates the fact that democratic traditions are deep-rooted in Pakistan's polity." See the web page available from <http://www.pakistan.gov.pk>; Internet; accessed 5 January 2006.

²⁶ Asia Pacific Online Network of Women in Politics, "Women in Pakistan," available from <http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/pakistan/pakmain.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 March 2006.

²⁷ Franks, 539.

²⁸ PEW Global Attitudes Project.

²⁹ Gastright.

³⁰ Pak-Millennium Conference 2002, Higher Education in Pakistan: Challenges for Reform held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology & Boston University, "Conference Report on Fiscal Solvency and Financial Management", 13-14 April 2002, available from <http://web.mit.edu/bilal/www/education/pmc2002report.pdf>; Internet; accessed 2 January 2005.

³¹ Although beyond the purview of this paper, following are a few thoughts on resolution of this long standing dispute, which has aptly been termed as the nuclear flash point: US mediation can greatly facilitate Pakistan – India negotiations keeping them focused and meaningful. The position that USA cannot mediate between these two countries is fallacious, because the US has mediated between them on two recent occasions, during the Kargil conflict in 1999 and the standoff in 2002. In the short term, the emphasis has to be on reduction of forces on both sides of the Line of Control and bringing peace to the people of Indian-held

Kashmir. For ultimate resolution of the dispute, the model of entire Kashmir being one constituency for plebiscite can be modified to allow self determination on regional basis and realigning the border to accommodate the wishes of the people of Kashmir. This would not only allow self determination for the Kashmiri people, but also allow face saving to both Pakistan and India, as no one country would take the entire Kashmir. Management of the dispute through purely bilateral measures, without substantive external efforts for its resolution is unlikely to be successful.

³² Amnesty International, 'Pakistan: US involvement in civilian deaths', available from <http://www.amnestyusa.org/regions/asia/document.do?id=ENGASA330022006>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.